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March 16, 2001

The Hon. James Nussle, Chairman
Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Nussle:

As you know, the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is currently protected against additional oil and gas exploration or development. Nevertheless, President Bush has just sent to Congress a Budget "Blueprint" that assumes an auction of oil and gas leases within the boundaries of the Refuge, specifically within the area that defines one of the most magnificent and rare unspoiled ecosystems in the world.¹ This assumed proposal would sacrifice the untrammeled and pristine nature of this existing wilderness for a limited supply of oil and an increase in federal receipts of an estimated \$1.2 billion in the year 2004.

Because of the unique nature of this natural treasure, Congress in 1980 prohibited oil and gas exploration or production on the coastal plain of the Refuge.² Repealing these protections is opposed by millions of Americans and by many Members of Congress, both Democrats and Republicans. Because of this widespread opposition, we believe it would be imprudent to assume any new revenues from this source at this time. When you consider the environmental values at stake in this extraordinary wilderness area, we believe it would also be a mistake to do so.

We strongly urge you to reject the President's request to assume revenues from drilling activity that is prohibited under current law and widely opposed throughout America. If the law ever changes, there will be plenty of time to incorporate new assumptions regarding federal revenues from this source in subsequent budgets.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey
Adam Smith

Rush Holt
Martin Frost

Jane Harman
David Bonior

¹ Budget for FY 2002, "A Blueprint for New Beginnings", Table S-8, p. 192.

² Section 1003, Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Action (ANILCA), Pub. L. 96-487, 94 Stat. 24. For a detailed discussion of Presidential authority regarding oil or gas exploration in the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge, see "Memorandum Re Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Response to Congressman Markey's Questions", Solicitor of the U.S. Department of Interior, January 18, 2001, at www.house.gov/Markey/issues.html.

Letter to Chairman Nussle/2

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